

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action dated March 22, 2007, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration. To further the prosecution of this application, each of the rejections set forth in the Office Action has been carefully considered and is addressed below. The application as presented is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Initially, Applicant thanks Examiner Erb for the courtesies extended during the telephone interview with Applicant's representative Scott J. Gerwin (Reg. No. 57,866), conducted on May 11, 2007. The substance of this interview is summarized herein.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-31 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as purportedly being unpatentable over Connelly (6,459,953). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

During the telephone interview of May 11, Applicant's representative discussed with the Examiner whether the mail processing system disclosed in Connelly processes both business reply mail and non-business reply mail, or whether it processes only business reply mail.

Applicant's representative pointed out that Connelly does not include any discussion of how a business reply mail piece is distinguished from a non-business reply mail piece and/or how each of these two types mail pieces are differently handled. Applicant's representative noted that the system of Connelly discusses only how business reply mail pieces are processed and that Connelly therefore did not disclose the limitation of claim 1, requiring, "automatically identifying the at least one business reply mail piece in the stream of mail pieces."

The Examiner questioned whether this limitation was broad enough to read on a system that receives both business reply mail pieces and non-business reply mail pieces, but does not distinguish between them. The Examiner noted that, in such a system, every mail piece (including business reply mail pieces) would be identified. Applicant's representative explained that this limitation was intended to mean that the business reply mail piece is identified as a business reply mail piece, and not a non-business reply mail piece. To make this even more explicit in the claims, Applicant has amended each independent claim herein to recite a limitation relating to determining that the at least one business reply mail is a business reply mail piece and not a non-business reply mail piece.

Connelly does not disclose or suggest such a limitation. Even if it is assumed that the system of Connelly receives a mail stream including both business reply mail pieces and non-business reply mail pieces (which Applicant does not concede), there is no disclosure or suggestion in Connelly that the system distinguishes a business reply mail piece from a non-business reply mail piece. Thus, Connelly does not disclose or suggest determining that a business reply mail piece is a business reply mail piece and non a non-business reply mail piece.

During the interview, the Examiner also questioned whether the claim was broad enough to read on a scenario in which a mail sorting system at a postal facility receives a general mail stream and sorts the business reply mail pieces from the non-business reply mail pieces, after which the business reply mail pieces are then manually taken from the mail sorting system to a dedicated business reply mail processing system (such as that of Connelly), and manually fed into the dedicated business reply mail processing system, whereby the dedicated system would read information off of the business reply mail pieces.

Applicant's representative indicated that each independent claim recites a limitation relating to automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece, and that this limitation was intended to mean that the automatic reading occurs while the business reply mail piece is in the mail stream. To make this even more explicit, Applicant has amended each independent claim to recite that the automatic reading occurs while the at least one business reply mail piece is in the stream of mail pieces.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully asserted that the claims patentably distinguish over Connelly. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-31 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as purportedly being unpatentable over Connelly is respectfully requested.

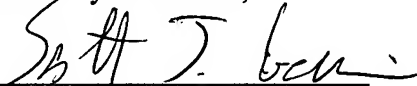
CONCLUSION

A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

Dated: July 12, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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